

Why eat Pigeon?



Pigeon: Where's the Beef?

I bet when you think of pigeons, the last thing you think of is food. But did you know that your grandparents probably enjoyed a good meal of pigeon with gravy several times a month? Pigeons used to be considered a 'staple' food, welcome at any table, essential for good nutrition. Nowadays, modern factory-farms find other species of fowl which are easier to breed in captivity more profitable, and gradually pigeons have come to be replaced on our tables and in our sandwiches by the "lunch birds" we are more familiar with today. But pigeon remains one of the most economical, healthy and mouth-wateringly delicious birds available today!

by the
**Bay Area
Rotisserie Friends**



**4th Annual
Summer Game Roast**

July, 2000



pages from a butcher's catalog, 1880's

Economical

Under the Federal Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1918, the U.S. Fish And Wildlife Service defines pigeons as an unprotected species (along with house sparrows and European starlings, although these are nowhere near as tasty) - you can hunt pigeon year round, with no license or permit, or limit on catch! In today's urban environment, why rely on factory-farmed, genetically altered game from a market when harvesting your local pigeon is easy as, well, as we like to say, "Nothin' but net, baby!"

Healthy

Pigeon tastes similar to turkey, but is lighter. A 3-ounce breast of pigeon contains 25% less fat than the same serving of chicken. "Heart-healthy" pigeon is high in tryptophan, like turkey, and contains only 30 mg of cholesterol and has 26 grams of protein.

While most people think of pigeons as "unclean", the fact is that this is just not true. Pigeons are one of the most fastidious (clean) creatures of the animal kingdom. The reason pigeons will eat whatever is thrown to them is due to their remarkable immune system, and it is because of this that they thrive in such numbers in our cities. Pigeon's digestive systems easily eliminate any toxicity in what they eat, passing it straight through them, and pigeon is the most disease-free and vital species in the animal kingdom. No wonder our grandparents were raised on it!

Mouth-Wateringly Delicious!

But don't take our word for it. Here are some suggestions:

CINNAMON-HONEY GRILLED PIGEON

2 pigeon, quartered and previously soaked in salt water (4 tbsp salt and enough water to cover pigeon. They should be soaked at least 4 hrs before cooking.)

1/3 cup water	1 cup dry sherry
3/4 cup honey	4 tsp cinnamon
2 tsp curry powder	2 tsp garlic salt

Rinse pigeon and place in shallow baking pan. Combine ingredients for marinade and blend well; pour over pigeons. Cover and allow to stand at room temperature 2-3 hours. Bake in 300 degree oven 2 hours. Remove from oven; place pigeons on grill over hot coals. Baste often with reserved marinade, turning at least every 20 minutes. Serves 2-4.

SMOTHERED PIGEON

2 pigeon	1/2 cup fat
1 cup milk or light cream	2 tsp onion flakes
2 tsp diced carrots	sour cream
flour, seasoned with salt and pepper	

Cut the pigeon into serving pieces. Roll in the flour. Brown pieces slowly in a large skillet in the hot fat.

Pour the milk or light cream into the skillet. Cover and cook over low heat 1 hour, or until tender. Place in a casserole with the onion flakes and carrots. Add enough sour cream to cover. Cook for another hour in medium oven, 325-350°.

Please check with your doctor to determine if regular servings of pigeon could be a part of a healthy dietary regimen that is right for you.

More Recipes

PIGEON A LA NEW MEXICO

2 pigeons, cleaned and soaked in salt water (4 tablespoons salt and enough water to cover pigeons. They should be soaked at least 4 hours before cooking.)

Stuffing:

4 1/2 cups soft bread crumbs	salt, to taste
1 cup finely chopped celery	1 cup chopped onion
1 cup chopped pecans	1/2 cup milk, scalded
1/2 teaspoon poultry seasoning	1/2 lb. bacon

Chili Sauce Mixture:

1/2 cup Worcestershire sauce	1 cup catsup
1/2 cup pureed mild red chili	1/4 cup A-1 sauce

Rinse pigeons, stuff, and wrap in bacon. Cover with aluminum foil. Roast at 300° for 3 1/2 hours. Baste with chili sauce mixture during last half hour. When serving, have remaining sauce hot in small dish to spoon over. Serves 4.

PIGEON SOUP

1 large or 2 small pigeons, cut into small pieces
 2 stalks celery w/ leaves, chopped
 8 cups water
 1 large carrot, shredded
 1 large onion, diced
 6 chicken bouillon cubes
 1 teaspoon salt
 thin noodles, rice or barley

Place all ingredients, except noodles, rice or barley, in a large kettle. Simmer gently 2-3 hours. If too thick, add 1 cup water. Add 2-3 ounces thin noodles. Rice or barley is also excellent for thickening the soup. Cook very slowly 1/2 hour longer. Like most soups, this one is improved by reheating.



Femme Faisant Le Potage De Pigeon (Woman making pigeon soup), Gaillard, 1872



Catching Your Own

A pole and net of the type used to clean the surface of swimming pools is ideal, but a large butterfly net may be almost as good for smaller pigeons. If you want to make your own, a wire hanger fitted with a fishnet stocking will hold all but the strongest of birds.

If you have no previous experience, you may want to take the birds to a butcher, but "field dressing" them yourself is relatively simple and doesn't take long. Pull

out the feathers from below the breast bone to the anal opening. Then make a cut through the skin and muscle starting below the breast bone, continuing down to the anal opening. Reach in and remove the internal organs, pulling down toward the anal opening. Be sure to take out the windpipe and crop. Pluck the game as soon as possible after field dressing. Hold the bird's body firmly between the legs and start plucking feathers in the chest region. (Pull the feathers toward the head with fast, deliberate jerks to avoid tearing the skin.)

When you finish the underside of the bird, start on the back and proceed to the legs and neck. The hardest part of the plucking operation is removing wing feathers. If the bird is in the "small" category, simply cut the wing off flush with the bird's body, using a pair of pruning shears. Also use the shears to cut off the legs and wings at the joints. Finally, remove the head and terminal end of the bird's body. Pigeons keep well in freezer bags until they're ready to be eaten.

Pigeon Facts

- In Boston, it is illegal to scare a flock of grounded pigeons so they take flight (for instance, by running into them).
- Pigeons are among nature's most hygienic creatures. A pigeon's bill is as clean as stainless steel.
- The Victorian fashion of wearing stuffed birds on hats originated from the tradition of stuffing pigeon skins as dolls for the children to play with after the birds were eaten.
- Not just carrier pigeons, but ordinary rock doves (the real name of the familiar urban pigeon) used to be used to carry messages in battle, and in World War I a wounded pigeon was actually awarded a medal for carrying a message from a captive soldier at Alsace across lines to his command.
- Pigeons were still so widely caught for food in the gangster era that the ease with which they were captured with a net gave rise to the 1930's slang term "pigeon" for someone who is easily duped or taken in (which in turn gave rise to "stool pigeon", an informant.)
- A flock of pigeons is called a "squabble".
- Did we mention that pigeons taste great?



Pigeons were widely known and trusted in W.W.I for their ability to get the message across.

4th Annual Pigeon Roast
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In "Meals On The Fly: Eat Lighter, Healthier, Tastier", the Bay Area Rotisserie Friends present popular recipes from around the world, as well as nutritional facts and a history of the rise, fall, and return of the pigeon to mainstream American tastes. \$5.95

This publication and others are available on our website.